

THE PLAYBOY SERGEANT WHO SPIED FOR RUSSIA

*Dunlap
Int. Sec.
File*

For years Jack Dunlap lived high by selling secrets from our most sensitive agency.

Ramrod-straight the soldiers stood, and fired their 21 shots into the summer air. The solitary bugler sounded taps, its notes echoing sweetly and sadly across the grassy knolls of Arlington National Cemetery. The Army pallbearers solemnly removed Old Glory from the casket, folded it precisely and presented the flag to the grieving widow. There, in panoramic view of the Capitol, just over a hillock from the site where John F. Kennedy now sleeps, the United States of America last July 25 buried perhaps the most damaging spy of the 1960's.

For five years Sgt. Jack E. Dunlap—a name still unfamiliar to most Americans—worked as a functionary in the most secret of all official bureaucracies, the National Security Agency. For about half that time, according to the best evidence now available, he was feeding American secrets to agents of the Soviet Union for cash on the barrelhead.

Until he took his own life rather than face an official inquiry, Dunlap had been living high under the very noses of napping counterespionage agents. During his last three years he frequented expensive resort hotels and yacht clubs from New Jersey to Florida, and acquired in rapid succession a cabin cruiser, a world's championship racing boat, a Jaguar, two late-model Cadillacs and a mistress.

Through it all the lanky sergeant was unobtrusively making his rounds as a \$100-a-week messenger. Until it was too late, nobody seems to have wondered about his sudden affluence or thought it odd that he drove a Cadillac to work.

Since no official charges had been lodged against him, the Army was required by law to grant his widow's request and bury him in Arlington. But his story refused to be buried; high-level investigations continue. For Dunlap's suicide at the age of 35 left many questions still unanswered—questions like: Exactly what secrets did he betray? And how did he get away with it for so long?

The Department of Defense, though it has announced that it holds evidence the sergeant did spy for Russia for pay, refuses to estimate the damage. Not everyone is so reticent. "He stole us blind," moaned one Government official.

To appreciate the full import of the short, happy life of Jack E. Dunlap, it is best to begin where he worked—at the sprawling concrete-and-steel National Security Agency headquarters on the outskirts of Fort Meade, Md., just 22 miles north of the nation's capital. Ex-

cept for the cavernous Pentagon and the huge new State Department Building, the enormous U-shaped NSA headquarters is the largest structure in the Washington area. Three football grid-irons could easily be laid end-to-end in its main corridor; its walls are interlaced with more electric wiring than those of any other building in the world. Despite its many distinctions, few tourists have even heard of it, and none has ever been inside: The way is barred night and day by a detachment of heavily armed, hand-picked Marines who patrol the four gate-houses and the triple row of high barbed-wire and electrified fences between them.

Far more mysterious than the well-publicized CIA, it is—in the words of a congressional committee—"the most sensitive and secretive of all agencies." Its mission is to eavesdrop on every Communist communications message within the range of the most powerful electronic ears that can be made. Reports pour into NSA headquarters from undercover agents, wiretappers and literally thousands of radio intercept stations located in every corner of the globe—on land and aboard ships and planes—and in orbiting reconnaissance satellites. Whirling in the NSA basement are the world's fastest and most efficient computers, designed and employed to break the secret codes of Communist nations and of every government worth the trouble.

Because of its keystone position in the security structure, NSA is privy to many of the nation's closest held secrets. It is reportedly part of the agency's job to pinpoint the exact location of every Communist military unit known to the West. Another job is devising and constantly updating the secret codes and ciphers of the United States—an area of secrecy which the Pentagon says was beyond the reach of Sergeant Dunlap.

Before a civilian can be employed by NSA, he must undergo rigorous investigation and indoctrination, precautions which have been made increasingly strict following a series of damaging lapses during the past decade. In 1954 an NSA cryptographic expert was indicted for passing secrets to the Dutch government, including the embarrassing fact that NSA had broken the Dutch codes. He pleaded guilty to a lesser charge and served four and a half years in federal prison. From 1957 to 1959 the agency harbored at headquarters a psychotic expert on Arabic affairs, who later defected to the Soviet Union. And in the summer of 1960 two

NSA mathematicians—William H. Martin and Bernon F. Mitchell—disappeared on vacation and their way from Cuba by Russian trawler to the Soviet Union, where they denounced their country and their agency at an elaborate Moscow press conference.

Investigation revealed that both Martin and Mitchell were sexually abnormal, a situation which should have alerted security agents. But Maurice H. Klein, NSA's assistant director and personnel chief at the time, insisted the agency enjoyed "as tight a security program as there is in the whole Government." Unimpressed congressional probers discovered it was loose enough for Klein himself to have fabricated some of the records in his own personnel file. He was forced out, and NSA took 22 steps to tighten its vigilance. It fired 26 suspected sex deviants on its rolls and in mid-1962

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told Congress it had rechecked the security file of every employee.

Still a strange double standard persisted in NSA's employment of thousands of military personnel such as Sgt. Jack E. Dunlap. In his case—typical under agency procedures—NSA routinely accepted the Army's word that Dunlap was trustworthy. Unlike civilian employees, he was not subjected to polygraph (lie detector) tests.

Initially there was no apparent reason to question his loyalty. By all the usual standards of postwar espionage, Dunlap looked like an exceptionally good risk. He was a family man with a wife and five children; he seemed a completely average Joe in an average bungalow in an average suburb. Born in Louisiana, Jack Dunlap had seen combat in Korea, been wounded and decorated for "coolness under fire and sincere devotion to duty." Perpetually eager for adventure—he had quit high school after three years to ship out on a merchant ship—he nonetheless earned the Good Conduct Medal three times for his unblemished Army record.

When he was assigned to NSA in April, 1958, as part of the Army's regular quota of support personnel, he served first as chauffeur for Maj. Gen. Garrison B. Cloverdale, NSA's assistant director and chief of staff. Later he graduated to duties which the Pentagon describes officially only as "clerk-messenger." Some sources say he was the obscure fellow who gathered scrap paper to be incinerated at the end of the day. Others describe him as a "documents expeditor," whose job it was to deliver highly classified data from one authorized official to another. Higher-ups in secret agencies are limited in their access to such papers by a strict requirement of "need to know,"

but it is difficult to circumscribe the faceless clerks and messengers who plod the treadmill of bureaucracy. Paradoxically, they often handle documents which some of their bosses are not authorized to see.

No one had any reason to suspect Dunlap's politics. He was so politically inert that he wasn't even registered to vote; and he was never heard to criticize his country. By all accounts he was less a conventional spy than an enterprising salesman of pilfered documents.

A Pentagon spokesman has quoted an estimate that Dunlap gave his wife, putting his extra income at between \$30,000 and \$40,000 "the first year," which is considerably more than the salary of the Secretary of Defense.

Not even the Pentagon can be certain how or when Dunlap began selling secrets. But it is clear that he had long found it difficult to pursue the American Dream on \$100 a week. At one point he

had resorted to moonlighting in a local service station, pumping gas at night for one dollar an hour. That did little to fulfill the alluring promise of his agency's recruiting brochure. "NSA workers," it announces, "are a vigorous lot, interested in exploiting to the fullest the recreational and cultural activities of their surroundings . . . Washington . . . the upper Chesapeake Bay, a famous water-sports playland . . . colonial Annapolis."

In mid-1960, after more than two years at NSA, Dunlap apparently took up a different sort of moonlighting, and his fortunes changed radically. In May he bought a secondhand station wagon which he put in his wife's name, as he did most of the family's new purchases. In that car he began actively exploring the nearby "water-sports playland." The following month he was able to put down \$3,400 for a 30-foot cabin cruiser, complete with a galley and a bar.

This was the start of a dizzying round of acquisitions and adventures. Flashing \$100 bills, Dunlap cashed large checks for total strangers on the spur of the moment. He spent \$2,000 on boat repairs and presented workmen with large and unaccustomed tips. His impulsiveness was legendary, and when neighbors criticized the appearance of his backyard, he was quick to take offense. "I'll fix them," he boasted to friends. "I'll put up a wall they can't even see over." Within a few days he had a high cinder-block rampart erected around the Dunlap property. "The Wall" was the talk of suburban Glen Burnie, Md.

A little later Dunlap attended his first meeting of a fraternity of speedboat fanciers known as the Stoney Creek Racing Boat Club. The newcomer impetuously produced a wad of bills and announced with a wave of the hand that the drinks were on him. "Always before it had been Dutch," explains a local businessman in the group. "We were flabbergasted." Eager for his own speedboat, Dunlap located the owner of the *Bobo*, a sleek hydroplane skimmer which had previously set a new world's record for its class—107.7 miles an hour. The sergeant peeled off the \$1,500 asking price from his bankroll, hitched boat and trailer to his light blue Jaguar and roared away toward Chesapeake Bay.

Dunlap became a dashing figure on Maryland's frolicsome Eastern Shore. Tall, engaging, an enthusiastic plunger, he could usually be found in a colorful sportshirt and slacks in one of his high-powered boats or cars, frequently accompanied by flashy lady companions. Always friendly and accommodating, he nevertheless demanded the best. Once he sent two friends to New York, expenses paid, to examine a large stock of handmade Italian speedboat propellers

and select the very finest for his craft. He loved to play the role of mysterious big shot. Ironically, the deep secrecy of NSA protected the casual hints that his modest military rank was a cover story for a job of major importance.

To questions about his golden touch there was always a ready—and ever-changing—answer. To one friend he confided that he owned land where a precious mineral powder, valuable in cosmetics, had been discovered. Neighbors heard he was heir to an extensive plantation in Louisiana, an account which would have surprised his father, a bridgetender for the Alabama State Docks. To others the grinning Dunlap admitted modestly that "I came into a little inheritance."

Testing the vaunted advantages of "colonial Annapolis," Dunlap began dating a blonde who lived there. Like many who knew him, Sarah—as we shall call her—was charmed by the energetic playboy. "He was always on the go," she recalled recently. "Today it would be a boat race or a dance, tomorrow the auto races. He had to keep moving, he could never sit still. The poor guy must have known all along that someday it would end the way it did."

Dunlap told Sarah he owned gas stations—first two, then three, then five, then a whole string of them. She never saw the stations, but she was more than willing to believe they existed. "I knew he worked at NSA," she says, "and I figured they knew where he was getting the money, and it must be all right."

She became aware of a curious silhouette in her lover's life—"the bookkeeper." She recalled that "when I first knew Jack (in 1961) he would go to see 'the bookkeeper' once every week. Later it was once a month. He'd return with a roll of bills, but he never said much about the meetings." Once he allowed Sarah to accompany him to Washington on a trip to see some men at a large apartment house. Later the FBI spent night after night retracing these steps with Sarah, but she could never identify the spot.

All the while, the lowly messenger, his top-secret pass dangling from a chain around his neck, trooped blithely to work each day past the heavily armed Marine guards and through the triple strand of fence. It is now believed he was transporting highly classified documents back and forth under his shirt. Some of

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them were reportedly passed to Soviet contacts in the parking lot of a large shopping center several miles from NSA.

NSA's slumbering watchdogs never roused. For months Dunlap drove his Jaguar, or his Cadillac convertible, or his high-powered yellow Cadillac sedan to work each day without attracting the slightest notice. At one point the married sergeant began dating an NSA secretary—but word of this relationship never reached anybody who cared. He arranged time off from work to race his championship speedboat, but there is no sign anyone wondered how he could afford it. When he injured his back piloting his boat at a yacht club regatta, an Army ambulance was sent to return him to Fort Meade Army Hospital, because, Dunlap explained, "They were afraid sedatives might make me tell a lot of secrets I know." Still no one asked what a \$100-a-week messenger with a wife and five kids was doing there in the first place.

He might be at it yet except for an act of his own initiative. Fearful that he might be transferred overseas at the end of his NSA tour of duty, Dunlap applied last March to leave the Army but retain his same job as an NSA civilian. His application, as he must have known, subjected him to the stricter security checks applied to civilians at NSA. For the first time he met the polygraph: The machine was his undoing. Two lie-detector tests quickly disclosed instances of "petty thievery" and "immoral conduct" which raised serious questions about his trustworthiness. For a while nothing happened. Then two months later additional investigations—which need not have extended any further than the agency's parking lot—revealed he was living beyond his means. The Army hastily transferred him to a routine job in a Fort Meade orderly room, and severed his access to all secret information.

A pair of suicide notes

As the investigation dragged on, Dunlap became nervous and depressed. "Nothing seemed to suit him," says a friend. "If plans went the slightest bit awry, he'd blow up without warning." On June 14 he checked into a motel near Fort Meade and paid for four days, telling the owner he was preparing to retire from the Army after 20 years' service (in fact, he served 11). The second night he attended stock-car races with friends, and hinted he was preparing to kill himself.

"At first we didn't take him seriously," recalls one of his companions, "but when he didn't show up the next morning we hurried to the motel. Jack was lying across the bed unconscious and burning up with heat. There were some empty beer bottles around and several used containers of sleeping pills. I think we got there just in time." While Dunlap was rushed to the Army hospital, investi-

gators collected two suicide notes, one to Sarah and the other to his wife, Diane. There was no reference to espionage, but Dunlap instructed his wife to tell the reporters, when they came around, about his meritorious service in Korea.

Now sleuths from NSA, the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps and the Army Military Police began collaborating on the case of the top-secret messenger. Dunlap was put under what one acquaint-

ance called "a halfhearted surveillance." After recovering from his overdose of pills, the sergeant frankly informed his company commander, an Army Security Agency officer, that he would try again to kill himself. Still it seems that no official steps were taken to stop him.

But if the Army appeared to be unconcerned, friends were anxious to save him. On July 20 a buddy wrested a revolver from Dunlap just before he apparently planned to use it on himself. Soon afterward, however, Dunlap was observed removing a length of new radiator hose from a motor pool at Fort Meade. Late on July 22 he methodically filled his gasoline tank, purchased a fifth of the finest Scotch whisky, drove to a deserted roadway on nearby Markey's Creek and strung up the radiator hose to bring the deadly exhaust fumes through the right front window of his sealed automobile. Fishermen found his body in the morning.

On August 20, nearly a month after his suicide, the leisurely investigators were jolted to discover that Diane Dunlap had found a sheaf of highly classified official papers among her husband's belongings. At long last NSA flashed word of the case to the FBI; and an army of investigators immediately set to work questioning everyone who seemed likely to know anything. Some agents concentrated on the difficult task of identifying Dunlap's outside contacts, reportedly including Soviet diplomatic personnel. A mysterious seven-digit number engraved on the underside of Dunlap's identification bracelet appeared to provide a hot lead—perhaps to a secret numbered account in a faraway Swiss bank. It turned out to be his sweetheart's phone number, which she had placed on the bracelet because her lover could not keep it in his head.

Inside NSA, worried officials tried to piece together a record of all the files which Dunlap might have borrowed. According to reports which the Pentagon refuses to confirm or deny, these included top-secret CIA estimates of Soviet Army, Navy and nuclear capabilities along with

comparable data on NATO countries. "The hell of it is," said one knowledgeable source, "we'll probably never know which papers he might have handled. To be safe, you have to proceed on the assumption that everything which passed through his section might be resting in a file in Moscow."

The Pentagon recently completed a lengthy inquiry into the Dunlap affair, personally ordered by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, but no details have so far been made public. If a similar series of tragic blunders occurred in any ordinary agency of Government, an aroused public would insist that those responsible be officially censured, demoted or fired. But the supersecret NSA is standing pat behind its protective curtain, hinting obliquely at yet another series of security reforms.

It is, of course, the age-old practice of bureaucracies, especially secret ones, to entomb their errors in obscurity. That is not particularly surprising. But there is special irony in the fact that NSA's guardians blundered so long that a man who "stole us blind" could be buried in hallowed ground at Arlington. THE END